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**Town Hall Meeting with House Speaker Paul Ryan. Aired 9=10p
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JAKE TAPPER, CNN HOST: Good evening. We are live at the George Washington University in the nation's capital for a CNN Town Hall event with the Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan, Republican of Wisconsin.

I'm Jake Tapper. I want to welcome our viewers in the United States and around the world. We're being seen right now on CNN, CNN en Espanol, and CNN International. Also, welcome to those listening on the Westwood One Radio Network and on CNN channel 116 on Sirius XM. And, as if that weren't enough, hello to our servicemen and servicewomen who are watching right now on the American Forces Network. Thank you for your service, by the way, and thanks for joining us.

It is eight days until Donald Trump takes the oath of office to become the next president of the United States. The republicans control congress and, soon, the White House. But, Speaker Ryan has not always seen eye-to-

eye with the President-Elect. He has been emphasizing his "Better Way" agenda for the path ahead. It covers key issues that directly impact the lives of all Americans: jobs, the economy, national security, tax reform and, of course, repealing President Obama's healthcare law.

Now, we have invited folks from all over the country to pose their questions to Speaker Ryan. We have reviewed questions to make sure that we cover a variety of important issues and a variety of perspectives. But, there was not one subject that was off limits.

Please join me now in welcoming the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan.

(APPLAUSE)

REP. PAUL RYAN, R-WI, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: Hi everybody. How are you doing?

TAPPER: Thank you, sir. Good to see you.

RYAN: Appreciate it. Thank you.

TAPPER: Have a seat.

Thanks so much for being here. So, the number one issue right now on Capitol Hill is the repeal of Obamacare. The Senate passed the first measure to begin the process. The House is going to do that tomorrow. We have lots of questions on Obamacare and lot of other issues. I want to start with one philosophical question about healthcare. During the campaign, Donald Trump was asked about healthcare on "60

Minutes". He said "This is an un-republican thing for me to say, but everybody has to be covered." Now, when he was asked "Who is going to pay for it?", he said "The government's going to pay for it." Do you share that philosophy at all, that the government should guarantee healthcare -- health insurance for every American?

RYAN: Well, I don't see it as the government having to pay for it. I think we all have to contribute and be a par

of it. I clearly think there's a role for the government in healthcare, no doubt about it. Let me say this: I believe that we can and should have a system in this country where everybody can have access to affordable healthcare including people with pre-existing conditions, no matter how much money they make.

That's not what this law is doing. This law is failing on that front and I think there is much, much better system that could be put in its place. I don't know how long you want me to get into this, because I'm sure there's some questions; but, Obamacare came in with all this fanfare and all this promise. Remember, "If you like your plan you can keep it"? That was proven the lie of the year at the time. Remember, it was going to lower premiums \$2500? They have skyrocketed since then. Remember, you were going to have all these choices? Five states, you only have one choice. Thirty-one percent of all the counties in America? One choice. That's not a choice, that's a monopoly.

And the problem is, the premiums are going so high, the deductibles are getting even higher -- the law is collapsing. And, so, we've got to rescue people from the collapsing of this law and fix this problem. And, so, that's what I'd love to engage in. And I know you've got questions, so I don't want to --

TAPPER: Yeah. No, (inaudible) --

RYAN: -- but, I think -- I think there's a lot we can do to --

TAPPER: You just --

RYAN: -- to improve this problem.

TAPPER: You just mentioned pre-existing conditions. Let me introduce you -- and please get up, because I know you want to engage. Jeff Jeans (ph) is from Sedona, Arizona. He was a life-long republican, and then something happened. Jeff?

RYAN: Come back.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: I was a republican and I worked for the Reagan and Bush campaigns. Just like you, I was opposed to the Affordable Care Act. When it was passed, I told my wife we would close our business before I complied with this law. Then, at 49, I was given six weeks to live with a very curable type of cancer. We offered three times the cost of my treatments, which was rejected. They required an insurance card. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, I'm standing here today alive.

Being both a small business person and someone with pre-existing conditions, I rely on the Affordable Care Act to be able to purchase my own insurance. Why would you repeal the Affordable Care Act without a replacement?

RYAN: Oh, we -- we wouldn't do that. We want to replace with something better. First of all, I'm glad you're standing here. I mean, really -- seriously.

(APPLAUSE)

QUESTION: Can -- can I --

RYAN: No, really.

QUESTION: Can I say one thing? I hate to interrupt you.

RYAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: Can I say one thing? I want to thank President Obama from the bottom of my heart, because I would be dead if it weren't for him.

(APPLAUSE)

RYAN: You mention you come from Arizona?

QUESTION: Sedona.

RYAN: Sedona; sure. Our old city manager, (inaudible) James was the city manager down in Sedona now.

QUESTION: My family is originally from Janesville.

RYAN: Really?

QUESTION: Yes.

RYAN: What's your last name again?

QUESTIONS: Jeans, like blue jeans. Craft (ph) was my grandfather's.

RYAN: Oh, okay, yeah.

QUESTION: He's buried there, actually.

RYAN: So, okay, we digress here.

(LAUGHTER)

So, Arizona -- this year, the premium increases for people on Obamacare, 116 percent; Oklahoma, 69 percent; Tennessee, 63 percent; Minnesota, 59 percent. The problem is, these increases were double-digit last year. They are really high this year. This thing is collapsing. So, do we want to make sure that a person with -- like yourself, with a pre-existing condition gets affordable care? Of course. Of course.

There is a better way to fix that problem without giving everybody else all these massive premium increases.

Deductibles are so high it doesn't even feel like you've got insurance anymore. So we -- obviously, I would encourage you to go to our website and take a look at our plan, but let me just give you a few ideas:

We believe that state high-risk pools are a smart way of guaranteeing coverage for people with pre-existing conditions. We had a really good one in Wisconsin. Utah had a great one. I was talking with a Congresswoman from -- from Washington today who was telling me how good their state high-risk pool is. What I mean when I say this is, about eight percent of all the people under 65 have that kind of pre-existing condition. My mother-in-law -- cancer -- she had melanoma in her 20s, breast cancer in her 50s, ovarian cancer in her 60s. People just have these things. And we don't want people to go poor or go bankrupt because this thing happens to them.

So we, obviously, want to have a system where they can get affordable coverage without going bankrupt because they get sick. But, we can do that without destroying the rest of the healthcare system for everybody else. That's the point I'm trying to make. What we should have done was fix what was broken in healthcare without breaking what was working in healthcare, and that's what, unfortunately, Obamacare did.

So, by financing state high-risk pools to guarantee people get affordable coverage when they have a pre-existing condition, like yourself, what you're doing is, you're dramatically lowering the price of insurance for everybody else. So, if we say let's just, as taxpayers -- and I agree with this -- finance the coverage for those eight percent of Americans under 65 in a condition like yours -- they don't have to be covered or paid for by their small business or their insurer who is buying the rates for the rest of the people in their insured pool, and you'd dramatically lower the price for the other 92 percent of Americans.

Let's just directly fix that so that everybody else can get more competitive rates and they don't have to pay for insurance to try to cover for those kinds of really expensive people. The problem with Obamacare -- the actuarial is called a death spiral. It's a really kind of ugly, gruesome term, but a death spiral is a mathematical term. They say when the insurance gets so expensive, healthy people won't buy it because they -- it's just a trade-off. The penalty to not buy is a lot cheaper than buying the insurance, so healthy people won't buy it; therefore, they won't go and participate in the insurance pool to cover the losses that sicker people, who have to have insurance, buy it.

That's what's happening to Obamacare now. So, you have unhealthy people more buying it, healthy people not buying it, and that is why the rates are going up so much. That's why all the insurers are pulling out. The biggest health insurance company in the country last year, United, pulled out of Obamacare. Aetna pulled out of Obamacare. Humana pulled out of Obamacare. As I mentioned, five states now are down to one insurer. Over a thousand counties in America are down to one insurer and they're all getting double-digit premium increases because they have a monopoly.

So, clearly, that's not working. And we see the worst is yet to come. The insurers are telling us they are going to pull out of whole states now. So we've got to step in in front of this problem, because, as republicans, we could just say -- I think the President-Elect said this yesterday -- "We could just sit back and watch it all happen and say 'Oh, look at what the democrats did.'" That would be irresponsible for us to do that.

So, we have to step in and rescue people from the collapse of this law. There are good objectives that were -- that they sought to achieve in this law. We agree with that. We think young people should be able to stay on their parents' plan until they are 26. We think there needs to be a solution, which we have, for people with pre-existing conditions. But we want more choices, lower prices, more competition, no monopolies. That's what we want to replace it with, and that's what we're working on right now.

TAPPER: So -- I'm sorry to interrupt. So, there are other questions about Obamacare and I want to let you get to them, but -- but, just to put a point on this, one of the things that Jeff was asking about is, you've begun the process of repealing Obamacare. Is the process of replacing it going to coincide with it?

RYAN: Yes.

TAPPER: Yes, it's going to coincide?

RYAN: Yes. Yes. So, without getting into all of the legislative mumbo jumbo, we want to do this at the same time and in some cases in the same bill.

TAPPER: OK.

RYAN: So, we want to advance repealing this law with its replacement at the same time along the lines of what - what I just described because I said, people just aren't buying insurance. Or if you get it, your deductible is so high, you're out-of-pockets are - they're so unaffordable, people aren't going to doctors.

So, we've got to fix that problem and the point I keep making in America, we spend more money than anybody else on healthcare. Surely, we can have a system that works for all of us.

TAPPER: Thank you, Jeff and I know you speak for a lot of people, so thanks for being here tonight.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) In Gainesville, maybe not in January. It's pretty cold.

TAPPER: Now, I want to introduce to you to Dawn Jones. She's an administrative officer with the U.S Navy, she's from Huntingtown, Maryland.

JONES: Thank you. As much as I'm for affordable child care -- or healthcare, I don't think Obamacare is hitting the mark. For example, college age children who are healthy are required to obtain child -- or healthcare, excuse me -

RYAN: Right.

JONES: But, they don't have the money to pay for it. So, what can Congress do to help them get affordable healthcare or opt out of it for those who cannot afford it?

RYAN: Yea, so, what's happening more and more these days because Obamacare's become so expensive, are the younger, healthier people just aren't buying it and they're just going without insurance.

Because, the -- the part of the law that's also counterproductive in this way is, you -- you can wait until you get sick, then get the insurance without a penalty and that's why they had this whole convoluted government run system that's basically collapsing. What we believe is the right way to go, which is what our plan is, are

refundable tax credits for people to be able to buy affordable coverage.

And so, by giving a person a refundable tax credit, a young person, maybe a person in college who maybe didn't stay on their parents' plan or somebody just getting started in work that doesn't have much of a tax liability. When I say refundable, that means you get the tax credit regardless of whether you have an income tax liability or not. Regardless of how much money you make.

Today, the big tax subsidy in law is you get to -- it's excluded from your income. So, what we're saying is the person in the highest tax bracket, the highest income earners get the biggest tax break for healthcare. But, that's not who are struggling to pay for healthcare.

We want to make sure that -- we want to instead have tax credits so that everybody can have a shot at buying. Take their tax credit and go buy a healthcare plan of their choosing and that's the other thing. We don't want to make people buy something that they don't want to buy. We don't want to force them to buy all these different benefits.

We want people to be able to get the coverage they want, the choices that they want, the options that they want and more importantly, we want competition. We don't want one insurer in one state. We want a lot of insurers competing against each other for our business as consumers. And this is the real big problem with Obamacare.

They basically decided that they'd have the government run it and now it's just a monopoly that is crashing. So, what we want to do, is make sure that anybody, a young person, old person, and in between gets a tax credit to go buy a plan of their choosing among a lot of choices that are competing against each other for their business.

More competition means better quality and lower prices. We also think health savings accounts are a real key critical piece of this. Let people save tax free for healthcare or let employers or parents, or whoever, put money in a person's health savings account to help them with their out-of-pocket costs or their premiums.

TAPPER: So, do you have a date for when you are going to repeal it or replace or, it's just going to happen this year?

RYAN: It's -- it's, yea, I don't have a date. But, that's something we're working on right now and it's going to take us a little bit of time but, we're working on this as fast as possible.

Again, because we see this law collapsing even faster this year, because we see more insurance companies pulling out, people with little or no choices and another round of double digit premium increases, we really feel we need to step in and provide better choices and better options as fast as possible. So, we're going to move on this as quickly as we can.

TAPPER: First 100 days?

RYAN: Yea, oh yea, it's something - definitely is a plan within the first 100 days to get moving on this legislation.

TAPPER: I want to introduce you to -- to Sherry Rigs from Fort Pierce, Florida. Who didn't vote on election day because she was recovering from a heart attack. And, we're glad you're here, too.

RIGS: Thank you.

TAPPER: One point that I just want to make is that obviously, and this fits in with what you were saying about refundable tax credits, but also, what you're about to be asked which is, the White House says there are 8 million Americans who now have health insurance because of the Medicaid expansion.

Medicaid was expanded in Obamacare and in states that accepted that money. So, are there a lot of people who are lower income who wonder what's going to happen to them? Whether they are on Medicaid or not. Please?

RYAN: Where are you from again?

RIGS: Good evening, Fort Pierce, Florida.

MALE: Florida.

RIGS: Well, you want to give tax credits instead of insuring people? Now, what if a person is --

RYAN: Can I get you right there for a minute? It's tax credits to buy insurance.

RIGS: OK. Well, what if a person makes so little that they don't have to pay taxes? Will they still have access to the Federal --

RYAN: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to say here in this last question. So, a tax credit, the way we described it when we say refundable, that means you get it no matter whether you pay taxes or not. So, it's like a voucher basically, to go buy health insurance. And, for -- for Medicaid some states do a pretty good job for Medicaid and some states don't do as well. The problem that we're seeing in Medicaid is more and more doctors

just won't take Medicaid. Because, they -- they lose money on Medicaid. It's - it's so over regulated and so bureaucratic that physicians just won't take Medicaid patients.

And, so our concern is, that people on Medicaid can't get a doctor and if you can't get a doctor, what good is your coverage? So, we really think there are a lot of good Medicaid reforms at the state level. There's some states that have done some pretty impressive things.

Indianan is one state, Wisconsin, we've done some pretty good reforms to make sure that people of low income get good coverage, but, also get access to care. Actually, get doctors that will take that care.

We want to see more of those state based solutions, so that we can make sure that coverage actually works. You're right on the numbers. About 10 million people got it on Medicaid. There are about another, I think, 11.5 million that got healthcare on Obamacare.

Obamacare at this time was supposed to have 23 million people. So, it's 11 million instead of 23 million. It's far missed its mark, but the problem is more and more people just are -- are getting a plan that they can't use

because their deductible is so high or we have a Medicaid problem. So, we want to reform Medicaid as well, to make sure that states can innovate it, so, that it works for their citizens and so they can actually -- actually get care.

TAPPER: Thank you so much.

RIGS: Thank you, thank you.

TAPPER: I want to -- well part of your plan for repealing Obamacare is also to defund Planned Parenthood. I - want to bring in Shannon Vow (sic), who is a physical therapy graduate student here at G.W. (sic) and wants to ask you about --

RYAN: Where are you from Shannon?

VOW: It's complicated. I moved here for graduate school, but, I'm from Northern California.

RYAN: OK.

VOW: So, among a lot of other things that we have heard in the news, Planned Parenthood also provides cervical cancer screenings, annual examinations as well as other critical healthcare services.

And, I will continue and I have used these services for the next four years. And, I can tell you personally that Planned Parenthood provided help when I couldn't go to anybody else. So, my question for you, Speaker Ryan, is, if Planned Parenthood is defunded, then, where will millions of women, low income groups and (inaudible) -

RYAN: It's -- it's a good question. First of all, I want to make sure you get the care you need. We want to make sure that all women get the kind of care that they need. Like preventative screenings and services like you're talking about. We believe that this can be better be done by putting that money in federal community health centers.

Federal community health centers, I have a lot of experience with them myself. They're -- they're all throughout Wisconsin. They're - they're virtually in every community. By putting these dollars in the federal community health centers, which provide the same kinds of services for every Planned Parenthood, there is -- there are 20 federal community health centers. They're vastly bigger in network, there are so many more of them, and they provide these kinds of services without all of the controversy surrounding this issue.

TAPPER: Can I just ask you, you -- you believe in providing more choice for people when it comes to health insurance, except for Planned Parenthood?

RYAN: Well, there is a long-standing principle that we've all believed in. And, by the way this is for pro-choice pro-life people that we don't want to commit taxpayer funding for abortion. And, Planned Parenthood is the largest abortion provider.

So, we don't want to effectively commit taxpayer money to an organization providing abortions. But, we want to make sure that people get their coverage. That's why there's no conflict by making sure that these dollars go to federal community health centers, which provide these services and have a vast larger network than these Planned Parenthood clinics, which - which are surrounded by a lot of controversy.

And, we don't want to commit people's taxpayer dollars to effectively funding something that they believe is morally unconscionable. Not everybody believes that and I understand that. But, that's a long- standing principle that we've had in this country that we want to maintain.

TAPPER: Of course, taxpayers don't fund abortions, right now, right? Because of the Hyde amendment.

RYAN: Because of the Hyde amendment, right. But, they get a lot of money and -- and you know, money is fungible and it effectively floats these organizations which then use other money. You know, money is fungible

TAPPER: A lot of --

RYAN: You don't have this controversy by funding health centers.

TAPPER: A lot of people on social media wanted me -- want me to ask you about Medicare and your plans for Medicare. Donald Trump during the campaign said about you, you want to knock Medicare way down.

(LAUGHTER)

That Mr. Trump said -

RYAN: I wouldn't call it the most articulate description of my plan. TAPPER: No, no, I'm going to let you respond.

(LAUGHTER)

He said, I'm not going to cut it and I'm not going to raise ages and I'm not going to do all the things that they, meaning you, want to do.

(LAUGHTER)

And, you say that Medicare needs to be changed --

RYAN: It does --

TAPPER: Or -- or, it won't survive. What are you going to say to President-Elect Trump to change his mind?

RYAN: We've - we've had a couple of conversations about it. Look, we don't all agree on everything. It's - I think people kind of know that. Here is the issue with Medicare; more than half of the money going to Medicare right now is the money we borrow. Medicare goes bankrupt in the next decade. Medicare along with Social Security, the two most important programs the Federal Government has in my opinion. I mean, when - when - after my dad died, my grandma moved in with my mom and myself, living on Medicare and Social

Security, battling all (simmers). I watched that program do amazing things for my own family.

So we know that we want to make sure that this program is successful. But if we want this program to succeed, we have to save it from the insolvency, the bankruptcy that's coming. And so the kinds of reforms that we have been pushing and talking about are reforms designed to save the program and give people more choices and they don't affect anyone in or near retirement. And here is the thing, if we can improve Medicare for the next generation, for the (tapper Ryan) generation on down, we don't have to change the benefits for anybody in or near retirement and we can continue to afford the cash flow, that promise has been made to them but there is no way on the current path we are on, Medicare will be for our generation when we retire.

So we better get prepared to fix this problem while it's so containable and solvable without affecting the benefit or the choices of plans of people currently on Medicare like my mom and that's something that we have to just own up to in this country. It's - it's the biggest part of the debt crisis in the future, and it is something that we have to deal with. And the point is, I think these reforms are better. I like the idea of saying to a future senior, if you like the traditional Medicare plan, you can keep that but if you want to choose from a list of competing health plans that are comprehensive competing for your benefit, that are guaranteed benefits like federal employees have, you should be able to choose that, too.

TAPPER: If you like your plan, you can keep your plan?

RYAN: Yes, and well - and that's what premium support is.

TAPPER: Alright, got you. RYAN: Well, that active choice in competition, it's been proven to - you know, you're going to hear this (theme), it's proven to drive down cost because it makes those insurers compete against each other for our business.

TAPPER: We're going to take a very quick break. Coming up next, Russia's hacking of the U.S. election, what will congress do about it; that and much more ahead. With Speaker Paul Ryan, we are Live from the George Washington University. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

TAPPER: We are back live from the George Washington University, home of the colonials along with Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan. Now members of Congress earlier today were briefed by top intelligence officials about the hacking activities by Russia into the election. There are a lot of concerns among the American people about the Russians. I want to turn to Ray Daffner, he is an independent voter from Virginia. Ray?

RAY DAFFNER, VIRGINIA RESIDENT: Mr. Speaker, my grandfather came from Russia to The United State and his family had a prosperous business and they left not because they wanted to but because they were forced to by anti-Jewish (pilgrims) that threatened not just our livelihood but their life. Putin's Russia continues to treat their citizens in an undemocratic way and worse, they imprison and they assassinate their critics, they assault their neighbours like Ukraine, they support our enemies, and they undermine our allies; and of course, most recently, they've interfered in our election through hacking and possibly have attempted to blackmail our highest officials.

So my question Mr. Speaker is what will you and what will Congress do to help ensure the safety of our democracy and specifically, what will Congress do to penalize Putin and his government for their actions?

RYAN: So I agree with your basic assessment of Russia. I think Russia is a global menace led by a man who is menacing. Vladimir Putin does not share our interests, he frustrates our interests, he violates his neighbours, he does all those things you say on free speech, he is not democratic; I really think a lot of the things that he is doing is to try and delegitimize the other democracies so that his illegitimate democracy doesn't look as illegitimate by comparison.

So I think that there is a lot that he is doing and it's not just here, he is doing this around the world. He is doing this in Europe, he is doing this in capitals around the world. So I do see - I call the Russia hawk, I said they call us these days, I guess. So I do share that concern. I think we have to step up our game on Russia. I think we have to step up our game with respect to confronting Russia when they act like this, when they frustrate our interests. I think clearly and I do - I do believe that they tried to affect our elections by meddling in our elections. If you're going to medal in elections, you are trying to affect it, there is no place for that.

Having said that, I think it had no bearing on the election. I think Donald Trump won it fair and square, clearly and convincingly but the fact that a foreign government tried to medal in another government's elections is wrong. And so I do think sanctions are called for. I think - frankly, the current President put sanctions that I think we're a little late, should have done it earlier. So I do think we had a bad Russia policy in the last administration. I think the reset was too much of an appeasement policy, and I think we're now reaping the bad benefits from that. So I think we need a stronger Russia engagement policy for sure across the board.

TAPPER: So Ray just alluded to it but obviously, as you know, because you were briefed on it, intelligence officials have alerted the President-elect that there are claims by Russians, claims that they have materials that could be compromising and that there are communications between his campaign and the Russian Government claims (inaudible). But let me just ask -here is the question; Donald Trump says this is a political witch hunt and the intelligence agencies are politicizing intelligence.

You are the Speaker of the House, you've been (privy) to some of the most classified briefings. Do you agree - are the intelligence chiefs trying to change -

RYAN: I do not think Donald Trump - what has been elevated is private opposition research done by a political opponent on completely unsubstantiated rumours and that has now been elevated and that I think is wrong. I don't even want to confirm any more legitimacy about this stuff by even talking about it and I think that people have conflicted this to think that it's somehow legitimate, that this is a product of the intelligence committee, it's not. And I do think by including these things and merging them, it has given that misimpression.

TAPPER: So you think -

RYAN: I don't think taking opposition research from a political opponent on total hearsay unsubstantiated rumours and combing it with intelligence information was the right thing to do.

TAPPER: So you take issue with the intelligence chiefs including this, this two-page synopsis that attacked on the end of their -

RYAN: Yes, I won't get into - I'm not going to comment on what documents we get and don't get.

TAPPER: But you take issue with what they did?

RYAN: I take issue with this even being talked about because it's not even worthy of media. I'm blessed CNN didn't publish it but some people did. And I don't think it's completely unsubstantiated. Let me put it this way, the Russians are up to no good, we all know that. And I don't think we should give any more credence to this and we've got to make sure going forward that we do everything we can on cyber, on all of the other things to make sure that they can't do this again; and we've got to help allies, too. We're going to make sure that we help our Europeans with their elections, block this kind of interference from coming, that's what I think we should be focused on. TAPPER: So just to put a button on this, you agree to a degree at least with Donald Trump assessing that this is the politicization of intelligence?

RYAN: I think it has been politicized. I don't - I can't tell you who is for politicizing but it has been politicized and I think that's wrong. I think as Donald himself gets to know the Intelligence Committee, as I know them very well, and when you're second in line, you get the same briefings. I think he is going to learn that there are lot of good men and women in the Intelligence Committee that risk their lives for this country to keep us safe and I think he'll learn to appreciate the service and the value that they have. But I completely understand why he is frustrated that what eight/nine days before his inauguration, this junk gets thrown out there.

TAPPER: So what you were talking about Donald Trump winning, one of the reasons he won, especially in places like the great state of Pennsylvania and Michigan and Wisconsin - the great state of Wisconsin, I suppose.

RYAN: Go packers, (all right).

TAPPER: Is that - what's his position on trade? It really motivated a lot of voters. It's a position you don't share I want to introduce you to Bill Jones, he is a tool and (dye) maker, he runs a medium- sized manufacturing company in Cabot, Pennsylvania. Please.

BILL JONES: Mr. Speaker, I have concern about our trade deals, our unfair trade. We have lost in the past decade, probably hundreds of jobs, our community has lost thousands of jobs; these are good jobs in our community with healthcare and retirement benefits. I actually started supporting Mr. Trump more when he started talking about fixing these trade deals. Our support grew because without trade deals - without fixing them, our country will not have the good paying jobs we need.

Now, my question to you, Mr. Speaker is, how will you as leader of the House help with this new administration fix these trade deals?

RYAN: It's a great question actually, and we've talked about this a lot. The President-elect and his economic team and myself about how do we work together to do just what you said because look, whenever I go to my kids' track meets, it's Monterrey Stadium in Janesville, Wisconsin; and you look down the end zone and you see a shut GM plant. The core of my hometown - and the employer was General Motors and it's now a 4 million square foot (mothball). So we have experienced the same kinds of things you're talking about where we have lost really good family supporting manufacturing jobs. I think there are a number of things we can and should and will do.

Number one, we do need good trade deals but here is the point; getting good trade deals means go out and get other country to play by our rules. You add up all the countries that we have trade agreements with, we have a surplus - a trade surplus with them. You add up all the countries we don't have trade agreements with, we have massive trade deficit with. And so the secret to success is go out and get agreements. That's why I think of all the people who (ceded) the Presidency, who are negotiators, Donald Trump is that. And I believe that he has the tools and the skills to go out and get good agreements, to get other countries to play by our rules so we have a level playing field, that's point number one.

Point number two, and I know you're walking toward me and I don't mean to (jawbone) too much but our tax reform we think is really critical. We hit our businesses so much more than our foreign competitors hit theirs. The industrial world average tax rate on businesses like tool and dye makers, 23%; if you're a (inaudible) corporation, pass-through, top tax rate 44.6% or if you're a corporation, 35%. We are taxing our businesses at

such higher tax rates than the other countries tax theirs. So number one, we're going to get those tax rates down but number two, with all these other countries; almost all our competitors do is they have a tax system where they border adjust their taxes. They - when they make something to sell overseas into America, they take the tax off of it and then it comes into America and it's tax-free.

If we make something, we tax it and send it to those countries and as it goes into their country, they tax it. So let's -- you got an example?

BILL JONES: If i may?

RYAN: Yes, sure.

BILL JONES: When you talk about that, that's just -- to me just baffles me that we cannot fix that.

RYAN: That's what our Tax Reform Bill does.

BILL JONES: We need to level the playing field between us and our largest trading partner China without doing damage but obviously they need us and we do need them.

RYAN: I agree with that.

BILL JONES: But without levelling this playing field we cannot compete -

RYAN: I actually - that's right.

BILL JONES: We just cannot.

RYAN: Let's take Harley Davidson, something we're really proud off in Milwaukee and Wisconsin. We make a hog in Milwaukee, we send it to China, it's taxed in Milwaukee, in America; and then China taxes it as it goes into the country. If - you know, they make a hog in China, it's taxed once and not twice, like ours. If Toyota or

Honda sends a motorcycle from Tokyo into China, they take the tax off of it, it goes and it's taxed once. So we're doing it to ourselves. I know that's a little confusing, the point I'm trying to say is let's level the playing field and do the same thing they do to us that we do to them and by doing that, by saying we take our tax off our exports and place it on our imports, we are levelling the playing field and at the end of the day we're making China pay for our tax reform.

So I think that is one of the smartest things we can do to level the playing field and put American manufacturers, American producers, American products on a level playing field with the rest of the world to help us create more manufacturing jobs.

TAPPER: Thank you so much, Bill. I want to turn to another issue where Mr. Trump got a lot of support, that is an issue where you're not necessarily on the same page, shall we say; and that is Mr. Trump's position on illegal immigration and reducing legal immigration, as well. There are a lot of sceptics among his supporters of you and other Republican establishment types. Marry Ann Mendoza?

RYAN: They didn't used to call me Republican establishment types until about a year ago.

TAPPER: You're the Speaker of the House; you're the Speaker of the House, you did it to yourself.

RYAN: OK, I've been there a year.

TAPPER: You did it to yourself, man. All right, Marry Ann Mendoza is a realtor from Mesa, Arizona and she has a very serious question about this.

MARY ANN MENDOZA: Good evening, Speaker Ryan. My son, Brandon Mendoza was a Sergeant with the Mesa, Arizona Police Department. He was killed on May 12, 2014 by a three-time legal limit drunk, high on meth, repeat illegal criminal who smashed head-on in a violent head-on collision on my son - to my son on his way home from work. We now have Mayors who are creating sanctuary cities and using taxpayer money to protect these illegals. What do Americans have who are permanently affected by illegal crime? We've got politicians protecting them, we have court systems that are allowing them to stay in the country, and I'd really

like to ask those Mayors, which child of yours would you choose to lose in order for illegals to stay here because that's the price I've had to pay? And I want to know how you're going to stand by our new President Trump elect, ending sanctuary cities, securing our borders, building a wall, properly vetting refugees who are coming in to stop the assault on our country, our citizens and our economy? Are you going to stand up for America, Speaker Ryan?

RYAN: First, let me say I'm so sorry for your loss.

MARY ANN MENDOZA: Thank you.

RYAN: You just made me think of a Sheriff Deputy (inaudible) we lost the same way, a multiple illegal immigrant drunk driving, head-on collision, going down the interstate. It's just awful. Donald and I agree completely on that. There is no daylight between us on that. So what I mean that sanctuary cities are a violation of the Rule of Law and they are not to be tolerated, we agree with that a 100 percent. That means if you want Federal assistance, you're not going to get it, you got to enforce the law. And what the President-elect has asked us to do is focus on two things in Congress, with respect to this issue immediately and that's what we're doing. We're getting Congress working on that right now and that is to secure the border, and to enforce our laws with respect to criminal - violent criminals who are illegal aliens. We 100 percent agree with that because we are a nation of laws that need to support our laws. For instance, we're now working on legislation to make sure that the resources are deployed to the border, so that they can get what they need to secure the border. We passed this law - I voted for this - 2006, I think, about ten years ago, to secure our border and it never got done because of this past administration.

We now have a President who is serious about securing the border. He's telling us it's one of the top six things I want to get done this year in Congress. So we said, absolutely. So, what I'm telling you is we support that, agree with that. And now, not only that, we're working on how to execute that in this new Congress.

TAPPER: Thank you, Mary Ann.

RYAN: I'm sorry about your loss.

ANN: I just want to say one other thing. Do you know how many lives have been lost by repeat, deported criminals who are coming over our unsecured border? If we don't have a wall and we deport these criminals, they will keep coming back, killing more of us.

RYAN: That is why the two things that he has asked us to focus on is deporting violent criminals, who are repeat offenders, and securing the border. We agree and that's what we're working on.

TAPPER: Thank you, Mary Ann. And our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. I want to bring in now Angelica Villalobos. She lives in Oklahoma City. She was brought to the United States illegally from Mexico when she was 11 years old, so clearly through no fault of her own.

ANGELICA VILLALOBOS: Thank you, Speaker Ryan. My name is Angelica Villalobos. I'm undocumented. I've been - like he mentioned, I've been living in the State of Oklahoma. I'm here with one of my daughters, Destiny. I've been in the United States for 21 years. I am protected from deportation because of the DACA program. To be protected, I applied, went through a background check, and I paid almost nearly \$1,000 in fees. It's clear that if DACA gets repealed, my daughter will lose her mother. And - I'm sorry. She will lose her mother and I want you to know that DACA has helped me. What do you - do you think that I should be deported and many families in my situation should?

RYAN: No. No, Angelica. First of all, I can see that you love your daughter and you are a nice person who has a great future ahead of you and I hope your future is here. I'll even repeat the sentiment that our incoming president says. That's the problem he wants to focus on. This is not the focus.

And so, what we have to do is find a way to make sure that you can get right with the law and we've got to do this in a good way, so that the rug doesn't get pulled out from under you and your family gets separated. That's the way we feel and that is exactly what our new incoming president has stated he wants to do.

Look, I got married in Oklahoma City. It's a great community. It's where - my wife is from that area. And I'm sure you're a great contributor to that community and we don't want to see you get separated from your family.

So, we have to figure out how to fix this. But to do that, people need to have confidence that our laws are being followed and that we actually know who is coming and going, that we actually have a secure border.

So, I think what's really important for this issue writ large to get fixed - and Jake mentioned that I have a background in this - we've got to make sure that these laws are being enforced, that we are controlling our border, so violent criminals, repeat offenders don't come in and do these kinds of horrific things. We've got a drug problem, we've got a lot of problems and we want to be able to secure our border. When people get confidence in this country that our border is secured, that our laws are being enforced, then I really believe the country - all people in the country will be in a much better position to fix these thornier, bigger problems. But if you're worried about, you know, some deportation force coming, knocking on your door this year, don't worry about that.

TAPPER: So, let me ask you a question. For those who don't know, DACA is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival. It's an executive action that President Obama took, granting legal status for individuals like Angelica. If President-Elect Trump wants to undo DACA, you would tell him don't do it?

RYAN: Well, I think we have to come up with a solution for the DACA kids and that's something we, in Congress, and the Trump transition team are working on, is what's a good, humane solution.

There is a constitutional issue here, which is President Obama tried to unilaterally write laws without going through Congress. And as you know, one of the separation of powers, Presidents don't write laws. Congress writes laws. The elected legislative branch of government are the ones who write the laws. And so, this current president, President Obama, on this and many other occasions tried to go around Congress to unilaterally write laws, which is not the power of the president. So, there is an - that is unconstitutional.

And so, the point is, you just organize your life around this. You just told us how important this is to you and your family. So, what we have to do is figure out how to have a humane solution to this very legitimate, sincere problem and respect the rule of law. And that is what we're ...

TAPPER: The government has information about her now. What happens to that information? Will you

introduce legislation to block it from being used to deport her?

RYAN: Everybody thinks that there's some deportation force that's being assembled. That's not happening.

TAPPER: President-Elect Trump actually used the term deportation force. RYAN: That's not happening.

TAPPER: But that's why people think it.

RYAN: I know, I know. And I'm here to tell you, in Congress, it's not happening. And what's happening is - where did she go?

TAPPER: Mary Ann?

RYAN: Mary. What's happening is that's what he's asked us to focus on, that's where we're focusing on. Secure the border and the people who are violent criminals, repeat offenders who keep coming back in, we've got to focus on that. That's what we're focusing on.

TAPPER: We have to pay a couple of bills. Take his seat. Coming up ahead, draining the swamp. Is Congress i step with the incoming president. We'll have more with House Speaker, Paul Ryan. Live from the George Washington University. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

TAPPER: We are back live. Our guest this evening, Speaker of the House, Mr. Paul Ryan. I want to bring in Gail Wilson. She grew up in Texas. She works in international development. She is a Republican.

GAIL WILSON: Since you've been elected to Congress, you've picked up a (inaudible) as an expert on the budget. As the Trump administration and their agenda, increasing the funding with infrastructure, building a wall along our southern border and increasing the capacity of our military, all while simultaneously cutting taxes. Do you believe that the agenda is fiscally solvent?

RYAN: Yes. The tax reform we plan to be what we call revenue neutral, meaning to pay for itself. So, for taxes it's close loopholes and special interest carve-outs, which broadens the tax base, meaning more money so we can lower the tax rates so we're more competitive. The gentleman who is a tool and die maker, that one provision I was telling him raising a trillion dollars in revenue to help us lower our tax rates. So, for instance, the tax reform we see is revenue neutral. On the other mention - - things you mentioned do cost money. We have to pay for those things and that's what our spring budget is going to do. So, for instance, there's a big infrastructure problem in this country. Whether it's canals, whether it's roads or bridges or rail or airports, that's

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o, in our budget, come up with other spending offsets to pay for those kinds of things, and that's why we want to prioritize spending to do that.

TAPPER: Thank you so much.

Gail Wilson: (Inaudible) Because, you know, it's harder here in D.C. And like - - I mean, it's hard. I mean, sometimes we make decisions, you don't think about the youth.

TAPPER: CNN is reporting tonight that the Trump - -

RYAN: That's why we need growth and jobs.

Gail Wilson: Yes.

RYAN: That's why we need economic growth.

TAPPER: CNN is reporting tonight that Trump transition officials want your tax reform proposal that the Congress is now working on to include a measure, championed by Ivanka Trump, that would include a child care tax credit and six weeks of maternity leave. You have voted against paid parental leave in the past. Will you support the Ivanka effort getting into the tax reform bill?

RYAN: That's definitely something that's on the table. The Ways and Means Committee, which writes our tax laws, are going to be looking at that. I don't want to get ahead of myself, because it's too soon to say what is in or not in the tax bill.

TAPPER: So, Speaker Ryan, I want to bring in Greg Gross. The context here is one of the first things that happened last week when you convened with the House Republican Caucus is they, against your wishes, wanted to gut, undermine, weaken the Office of Congressional Ethics. That alarmed a lot of people, including president-elect Trump, who said it shouldn't be a priority, who want to drain the swamp. Sir?

Greg Gross: Thank you. One of the things that this election has demonstrated to Democrats and Republicans is that a lot of Americans don't trust the representatives in Washington.

RYAN: Yes, you think?

Greg Gross: It explains a lot. And Donald Trump pledged, among other things during the campaign, to, in his words, drain the swamp of Washington corruption. And then he, just before the election, offered a series of ethics reform proposals, three directed at Congress. One was a five-year ban on lobbying by members of Congress and their staffs, after they leave the government.

RYAN: In the administration.

Greg Gross: Well, for Congress, he said. He also called for eliminating the loopholes in the definition of what is a lobbyist under the law, under the federal, or the Lobbyist Disclosure Act, as you know. Third thing was congressional term limits, impose a constitutional amendment to impose term limits. As you know, that's been here for 20 years as a proposal.

RYAN: Right.

Greg Gross: So, I worked in the U.S. Senate as a chief of staff for many years for several senators, so I know how difficult these problems can be, especially the broader issue of trust. Do you support these three specific

proposals? That's the five- year ban on former members of Congress and their staffs lobbying after they leave government. That's for Congress, not - - he did it in the executive branch, for Congress. Second thing is expanding the definition of a lobbyist under the federal law. The third is a constitutional amendment on term limits. And then, what else would you do beyond that to restore trust?

RYAN: So, let me first get to the point that he made, which is this is kind of an obscure agency that can make - anonymous people can make allegations with a person with no due process and you have no right to confront your accuser. So, there were a lot of people in Congress who were concerned that unsubstantiated allegations were being leveled against them. They didn't know who they were, and they didn't have an opportunity to confront that accuser. So, there's a legitimate problem with that. I, as you said, do not think this was the time to be dealing with that. We have more important issues that the people of this country care about, and that's not one of them. To your point, I'll go backwards- forwards. So, I agree with term limits. I've always supported term limits. I think term limits is a smart thing to do. It should be uniform across - - we shouldn't just have term limits for Wisconsin and only Illinois. And the only way to do that is a constitutional amendment. I've long supported a constitutional amendment for term limits. I think it freshens the system. We impose term limits within Congress on our critical positions, like our chairmanships. So, we rotate people through so they can't be in the same job in Congress, because we term limit our people. So, I've always liked the term limit proposal. On the lobbyist thing, some reforms are a little more complicated than they seem. Do I think a person shouldn't leave right away and go into lobbying? Yes, I agree with that. They should not do that. But, what if you want to become an advocate for the Cancer Society? What if you want to, after you've retired, help your local hospital system and be on their board to support them and then go get legislation? There are a lot of other unseen circumstances that can play into this, and you've got to be careful about that. When people leave Congress, what's wrong with them going out and advocating for causes that they believe in? So, the question is, are they going to go, leave, and get rich, and go shill for a company? That, I think, is something that is an issue that needs to be dealt with. We do ban it. The question is, should we lengthen the ban? That's the question. But I don't think we should tell men and women we want a citizen legislature, take time out of your private life and come and serve, and then go back into private life and you can't get engaged in civics. I think that's dangerous. I don't think that's a good idea.

TAPPER: Sorry to jump in, he's got one more point. You can tell him at the the commercial. Let's take another

quick break. When we come back, how will Donald Trump's tweeting habits affect U.S. policy? Stay with us.

(Commercials)

Welcome back to CNN Live, tonight at George Washington University. With one week until the inauguration of Donald Trump, House Speaker Paul Ryan is our guest. I see you've got your Packers pin on now.

RYAN: You bet I do. I had it on the last segment, too. TAPPER: But, I do want to turn to one serious question. Obviously, the nation is in the throes of an opioid epidemic. I want to introduce you to Craig Moss. He came from upstate New York to join us tonight. He says he's attended more than 40 Trump rallies during the campaign. Craig?

Craig Moss: Hello. I lost my son, Rob J. R. Moss, three years ago to a heroin overdose. And heroin comes into the towns and just ruins the communities and families. And my question to you, sir, is do you and the members of Congress intend to support Donald Trump's stance on protecting our borders by supporting his recommendations so we can slow down that heroin that's coming into this country? And secondly, are there any laws currently being put together that would provide and mandate - - and I stress mandate - - step-down procedures for folks that are being prescribed oxycodone and that type of drug?

TAPPER: By step down, just to - - you mean helping wean people who are on these opioids, wean them off?

Craig Moss: Exactly, yes. That's exactly - - yes, sir.

RYAN: Well, you know, unfortunately, I have heard too many stories like yours just in the last couple of years, and I'm really sorry about the loss of your son. I'm thinking of two buddies of mine in Janesville, Wisconsin, who lost their sons, just like you did. This affects everybody and it is an epidemic raging through our country. So, yes, on your border question, it's what we were talking about before. It's one of the reasons I said why we're building the border wall and the fence. This is one of the reasons, because we're getting so many drugs coming in from the southern border in particular, which is making it so much more high in supply and low in price. So, that is one of the big reasons why we need to secure our borders. So, yes, we do support our president-elect in

doing that, and that's something we're working on right now. We just passed legislation last month on opioid reform on a whole host of issues. We just - - literally, it went into law about a month ago, and it doesn't mandate step-downs, but it pushes a lot of reforms, like you just said, which is fixing the way prescriptions are written in America; digitizing these, so that you can make sure that a person can't go shopping around for prescriptions and making sure that physicians who prescribe these know what they're prescribing and to guard against the kinds of problems, because typically what happens is you get hurt, you know, you get in a car accident, you get a painkiller, and then that progressively takes you farther down the road to where you're addicted to opioids, and then comes heroin. That is the classic progression that we've seen, and that is what our landmark legislation - - one of the things I'm most proud of this last year, Republicans and Democrats came together, seeing that this was a raging epidemic, to pass the most sweeping legislation in this area that we've ever passed. And we put - - then a few weeks ago, at the end of - - I mean, before Christmas, I passed legislation funding it, putting a lot of money out to the states to fund this new policy. So much so that our governor in Wisconsin, Scott Walker, is just now convening a special session of our state legislature to deal with all the new federal funds coming into the state to fight opioid abuse and to fight - - it's law enforcement, it's medical professionals, and it's counseling and it's prevention. So, we have to have a full-front war against this opioid epidemic, and that is exactly what we passed and funded just a couple of weeks ago. So, this is happening everywhere in this country. And thank you for going around and talking about it. Thank you for making people aware.

TAPPER: God bless you, Craig. A lot of people in your shoes, and we're really sorry. All right. A lot of emotional actions, a lot of tough stories.

RYAN: It's a tough time in our country.

TAPPER: It is a tough time in the country. On a slightly lighter note, I want to bring in Christine Ford. She's a grad student in the school of public health here at GW. Please.

Christine Ford: So, I'm 23, so as a millennial - -

RYAN: And where are you from?

Christine Ford: I'm from Frederick, Maryland. It's, like, 45 minutes away. So, as a millennial, many people in my generation have Twitter, at least follow social media. Donald Trump has made a habit of calling out those who disagree with him, even you.

RYAN: I know. He did it to me all the time during the campaign.

Christine Ford: Even you, exactly, on his own Twitter account. So, I wanted to know how you feel his tweeting habits will affect both foreign and domestic policy in the United States.

RYAN: I'm going to go out on a limb here, and I'm going to say: This is going to be a very unconventional president.

Christine Ford: You think?

RYAN: All right, so...

What do you mean by that?

RYAN: So, he is going - - I think he's going to keep doing this, and I think he's going to be probably a little more restrained in his tweets, probably. But, it's all relative.

Christine Ford: Really, you do?

RYAN: I mean, just look. But I do believe it's been extremely effective for getting elected President, I've got to tell you. I mean, he was able to touch and tap into people's hearts and minds unlike - - look. I ran for Vice President in 2012. I was part of a national campaign. And I am just a marvel - - amazed at how well he connected with so many people. And I think he did that because of this. And so, I think he believes - - no, I don't think he believes, I think he has a very special, personal relationship with individuals. So, he connects directly with them in this country. And that's what I think is very interesting in this age we are in, where you don't, as a public official, have to go through the media to communicate to people; you can just do it directly.

And he has mastered that. I mean, so much so that he is now about to be sworn in as President of the United States. So, I don't think he's going to stop doing that. I think he's going to continue to work on mastering that. How it affects domestic policy and foreign policy, I don't know. We're going to find out because we're in uncharted territory. But he has mastered not just public opinion, but communicating directly with people and getting around the filters; and that is something that I think he feels very strongly about the fact that he's given voice to a lot of people who felt they've not guilty been heard, that have been voiceless.

TAPPER: Let me ask you a question about social media, which is: Your tenure as Speaker of the House has been in this age of wild social media. What written about you on social media has been the most amusing to you, and what has been the most irksome?

RYAN: I don't really pay attention to it. You get really thick skin doing this kind of a job, so things don't really bother me too much. Because if it's irksome, you just kind of laugh it off. You know, I actually do know what a dab is, okay? Just for the record. It's this. I do. So, the most amusing thing was, what, a week ago, when we swore people in, this congressman's son, we were doing the post, he was doing it - - he wasn't doing a dab, by the way, he looked like he was sneezing. He was going like this. He was holding a Bible and going like this. So that's not dabbing, in my opinion. Cam Newton dabs, all right?

TAPPER: So you took issue with his technique.

RYAN: His technique, and I thought he was sneezing. Because it looked like he was sneezing. It looked a little strange to me at the time. So, I think that kind of went viral and I got made fun of for that.

TAPPER: But you loved it.

RYAN: But I thought it was funny, yes.

TAPPER: He's been a great sport. Let's give a big hand to Speaker Ryan.

RYAN: Thank you.

TAPPER: And everyone else who made this town hall possible, thank you so much. A special thanks to our partners at George Washington University, and our audience who was asking the questions and sharing their stories, and also, of course, those watching around the world. Don't forget, CNN will have extensive live coverage of the historic inauguration of president- elect Donald Trump one week from tomorrow. Don Lemon picks up now. Good luck to your Packers, all right?

RYAN: I'm a Packers fan. And I know you're a Texas fan, but, hey, go Packers! Thank you.

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